Attachment 2-6

Fleming, Safety culture

improvement (2015) (handout).

Safety culture improvement

There is no easy or simple way to create a positive safety culture, as it evolves over time and is a reflection of the true values of the organization. It is generally agreed that safety culture improvement is driven by senior leaders (see sheet 2 on leadership). The popularity of safety culture has resulted in the proliferation of interventions purporting to create a positive culture (see table below). While some of these interventions may improve specific safety issues there is no published evidence that any single intervention can create a positive safety culture.

Common safety culture improvement interventions

Intervention	Target	Impact
Leadership training	Supervisors managers	Provides leaders with the skills to demonstrate commitment to safety
Behavior modification	Frontline employees	Involves employees in safety and rewards working safely
Hazard spotting	Frontline employees	Involves employees in safety and provides opportunity to show commitment to safety
Manager worksite visits	Managers	Provides a structured process for mangers to show concern for safety and learn about safety challenges faced by employees.

Creating and maintaining a positive safety culture is a continuous and ongoing process that takes effort. Organizations should adopt a systematic approach to safety culture improvement. This can be achieved by modifying the standard safety management systems elements to promote a positive safety culture. Specifically this involves creating a shared **vision** for the desired culture, specifying **responsibilities** of key groups to create this culture, putting **plans and actions** in place to promote the desired culture, **assessing** the culture on an ongoing basis, **auditing** safety culture processes and **reviewing** progress and creating improvement plans. If an organization is not actively promoting a positive safety culture, then it is very unlikely to maintain a positive culture over time.

Safety culture improvement model

The safety culture vision is similar to a safety policy statement or mission statement. It is a short statement outlining the desired safety culture that the organization is working towards. This vision statement is idealistic and it is something that the organisation is striving for rather than a reflection of the current situation. The vision clearly states the desire to continuously strive to improve. It should be a statement that all employees can read and agree that this would be a good culture to have. The creation of this statement should be an inclusive process that enables as many people to contribute as possible. This statement should be reviewed regularly.

The creation and maintenance of a positive safety culture requires everyone to fulfill their specific responsibilities. It is therefore important to specify the responsibilities and accountabilities of key groups (e.g. managers, supervisors and employees} in creating and maintaining a positive safety culture. It is useful to adopt a safety culture framework or model (see sheet 5 on composition} that lists the key elements of safety culture to identify key responsibilities. The following is a list of common responsibilities for key groups. This list is generic and not exhaustive but provides a starting point to create an organization specific list.

- Managers
  - o   Set the strategic direction for safety.
  - o   Monitor safety performance.
  - o   Allocate resources for safety programs.

Safety culture improvement

- Supervisors
  - o Display effective safety leadership behaviors.
  - o Monitor subordinate safety behaviour.
  - o Manage potential conflicts between production and safety.
- Everyone
  - o Demonstrate personal commitment to safety.
  - o Comply with all safety rules.
  - o Intervene if they observe an unsafe situation.

Organizations do not get a positive safety culture by wishing for one. A positive safety culture is created and maintained by the effective implementation of targeted plans and actions. These plans and actions are organization specific and based on safety culture strengths and weaknesses. Most safety critical organizations already have plans and actions that support a positive safety culture, although they may not be identified as such. For example safety leadership training for managers and supervisors supports a positive safety culture. Initially organizations should identify existing plans and actions designed to promote a positive culture before creating new plans and actions. This review might result in modifying current interventions to align more closely with the desired culture. For example safety leadership training could be modified to include a description of manager role in creating a positive culture. Organizations may find it helpful to conduct a safety culture improvement audit; to identify current practices and identify improvement opportunities. The plans and actions section should include short and long term objectives and link with other aspects of the safety management system.

It is important to assess the extent to which these plans and actions are having the desired effect. Safety culture can be assessed periodically using standard assessment methods (see sheet 7 on assessment) and continuously using recently developed safety culture metrics (see sheet 10 on metrics). In the context of safety culture improvement it is important that the assessment process maps onto the plans and actions designed to promote a positive safety culture. For example if the organization identifies a manager worksite visit process as one action to demonstrate management commitment, the assessment should include employee perceptions of management commitment. A safety culture metric for this action could include number of visits completed and employee ratings of the quality of the interaction with the manager.

It is important to audit the extent to which the elements of the safety culture improvement system are being implemented as intended. An audit might include an assessment of the extent to which employees know about the safety culture vision for the organization and their knowledge of their responsibilities in creating and maintaining a positive safety culture. The audit could also assess the extent to which the plans and actions specified are being implemented as intended and producing the desired result.

It is important to review the effectiveness of the safety culture improvement system on a regular basis. The frequency of the review will depend on range of factors including resources available and how long the program has been in place, but typically the program would be reviewed every two years. The review should include a multi-disciplinary team that include key stakeholders (e.g. managers, supervisors, frontline staff). The information required for the review includes the results of any safety culture assessments conducted, audits, other internal safety information (e.g. incident reviews) and external information (e.g. research or industry trends). The information for the review should be used to refine the safety culture improvement system.

Key points:
- Safety culture improvement requires significant effort
- Senior leaders are key to driving safety culture improvement
- The safety culture improvement system provides a systematic approach to safety culture improvement

Fleming, M. Scott, N (2011) Beyond hard hats and harnesses, How small construction companies manage safety effectively. In *Occupational Health and Safety Psychology for Small businesses* Eds Kelloway E.K. Cooper G.

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